

## Guinea

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Guinea was seized for much of the year by an epidemic of the Ebola virus that began in December 2013 in the country's southeast and soon spread to neighboring countries in West Africa. The president, initially skeptical about the disease's seriousness, declared a national public health emergency in August, and the government has been actively fighting the outbreak since then. The epidemic stoked fear and suspicion among Guineans, and attacks and threats against health workers occurred throughout the year. Relations between citizens and government have been strained as well. Direct talks over electoral rules between the ruling and opposition parties have stalled, and presidential polls originally scheduled for 2015 face the possibility of delays.

While corruption remains pervasive, the government took important steps toward resolving the country's most severe bribery scandal in years, suspending the mining license awarded to BSG Resources by former Guinean president Lansana Conté. The courts remain underresourced and overburdened, however, and scant progress was made on the long-overdue adjudication of atrocities committed by state security forces after a 2008 coup.

Freedom of movement and the free exercise of religion suffered somewhat as a result of the Ebola epidemic, though the government has maintained that some restrictions are necessary to curtail further spread of the virus.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

### **Political Rights: 17 / 40 [Key]**

#### **A. Electoral Process: 6 / 12**

The president is elected by popular vote for up to two five-year terms. The legislature was dissolved in 2008 amid a coup precipitated by the death of Conté. The leader of the coup, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, was shot and seriously injured in late 2009 by a member of his own guard following the violent repression of an opposition rally, in which security forces killed more than 150 people and raped and beat hundreds of others. A political accord facilitated a return to civilian rule in 2010. The new constitution that was adopted as part of the political transition established a number of independent entities to secure democratic rights, including the National Electoral Commission (CENI), a national human rights body, and a constitutional court.

In a presidential election held later in 2010, longtime opposition leader Alpha Condé of the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) defeated former prime minister Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) in a runoff vote, 52.5 percent to 47.5 percent. Most domestic and international observers validated the election, and Diallo eventually accepted the results.

Of the National Assembly's 114 seats, 38 are awarded through single-member constituency races and 76 are filled through nationwide proportional representation, all for five-year terms. The first parliamentary elections since the 2008 coup were held in September 2013. The months preceding the elections were marred by violence, ethnic and religious tensions, and disputes over the rules governing the polls. Recurrent protests resulted in more than 50 deaths between January and September. The RPG won a total of 53 seats, the opposition UFDG won 37 seats, the Union of Republican Forces (UFR) won 10, and a dozen smaller parties divided the remainder. In October 2013, a coalition of opposition parties declined to participate in further vote counting and called for the results of the elections to be annulled. The CENI admitted to irregularities, but nevertheless defended the validity of the results. The newly elected legislators took office in January 2014.

Presidential elections are planned for 2015, but the ongoing Ebola crisis has raised the prospect of delays. Many Guineans believe the epidemic is merely a pretext for Condé to postpone the polls; others believe the virus is a conspiracy orchestrated by France and multinational mining firms to keep Guinea weak and dependent. Opposition parties accuse the government of reneging on a July 2013 political pact designed to govern the conduct of elections. Talks between the government and opposition on electoral preparations were held in July, but quickly stalled and had yet to resume by year's end.

## **B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 8 / 16**

The main political parties are the RPG and the UFDG. More than 130 parties are registered, most of which have clear ethnic or regional bases. Relations between the RPG and opposition parties are strained, and recent incidents have inflamed tensions. In June, amid the ongoing dispute over electoral planning, the opposition withdrew from the National Assembly and launched street protests when the government cancelled a previously authorized UFR meeting. Opposition figure Amadou Oury Diallo was murdered in September in Conakry in what the UFDG described as a political assassination. Meanwhile, Condé accused his opponents of attempting to incite a military coup after opposition-affiliated websites spread rumors that the president had fallen seriously ill.

## **C. Functioning of Government: 3 / 12**

Corruption is rife, but the government has won praise for its proactive response to a scandal that erupted in 2013 over former president Conté's decision to award a mining license worth billions of dollars to BSG Resources, a company owned by Israeli diamond magnate Beny Steinmetz. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) launched an investigation into the deal in 2013 due to its possible violation of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and a French national pleaded guilty in March 2014 to attempted obstruction of a grand jury probe into the deal. In January 2014, Swiss authorities, who were already assisting Guinea in its investigation, announced that they had opened a criminal probe into the matter. A Guinean government inquiry published its findings in April, condemning the deal and recommending

that BSG's rights to the vast, untapped Simandou iron-ore mine be cancelled. The company, which denied all corruption charges, appealed the decision in August to an international tribunal, the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes, and asked that Guinea's plans to auction the concession be postponed. Separately, Guinea was declared in full compliance with the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative in July.

## **Civil Liberties: 24 / 40**

### **D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 9 / 16**

The 2010 constitution guarantees media freedom. In 2010, the interim legislature passed two new media laws: one decriminalized press offenses and more clearly defined defamation provisions, while the other created a new media regulatory body. Attacks on the press persist, but the government has shown increasing political will to reprimand (if not punish) perpetrators. In July 2014, the managing editor of *Le Fouineur* magazine was assaulted by members of the gendarmerie while reporting on an eviction in Conakry; the perpetrators were quickly arrested. In September, the potential risks to journalists of panic over the Ebola epidemic were highlighted when three journalists, along with five other members of a public-health delegation, were killed by villagers as they tried to disseminate information about the virus.

There are more than 200 newspapers in Guinea, though most have small circulations. While the state controls the national radio station and the only television broadcaster, there are more than 30 radio stations. Due to the high illiteracy rate, most of the population accesses information through radio; internet access remains limited to urban areas.

Religious rights are respected in practice, although there have been rare cases of discrimination against non-Muslims in government employment, as well as restrictions on Muslims' freedom to convert to other religions. Religious practice was somewhat curtailed by Ebola-related warnings against traditional burial rituals, which involve physical contact with the bodies of the dead and thus exacerbate the risk of contagion. Health workers have described these warnings as necessary to prevent further spread of the virus.

Academic freedom has been hampered to some degree by government influence over hiring and curriculum content.

### **E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 6 / 12**

Freedom of assembly is enshrined in the constitution but often repressed in practice. Clashes between protesters and state security forces were routine in the months prior to the 2013 parliamentary elections, resulting in dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries. Freedom of association is generally respected.

Although workers are allowed to form trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively, they must provide 10 days' notice before striking, and strikes are banned in broadly defined essential services. Nonetheless, unions remain active. The national transport union struck in April 2014 to protest racketeering at roadblocks by state security forces and other obstacles they faced.

#### **F. Rule of Law: 4 / 16**

The judicial system has demonstrated some degree of independence since 2010, and important steps were taken in 2014 to strengthen the capacity of the courts. The efforts of a new justice minister, appointed in January, were widely praised, and a High Judicial Council was created in July. Still, the courts remain understaffed and underfunded, and have been slow to prosecute high-profile criminal cases—most prominently, the massacre of opposition protesters at Conakry stadium in 2009. The courts have interviewed almost 400 victims of the massacre since proceedings began, but despite evidence of abuses committed by dozens of members of the security forces, only eight people had been charged as of September 2014. A lack of political and financial support has stymied progress in the investigations.

Security forces continue to engage in arbitrary arrests, torture of detainees, and extrajudicial executions. Riots erupted in Conakry in March when members of the gendarmerie killed a civilian. Prison conditions remain harsh and are sometimes life threatening.

The Ebola crisis has strained Guinea's security sector, and fear and government mismanagement have aggravated tensions between citizens and the state, especially in the Southeast, where the epidemic originated. In August 2014, residents of Nzerekore, the country's second largest city, rioted when health workers attempted to spray a market with disinfectant. In September, a mob attacked a public health delegation sent to a remote southeastern village to disseminate information about the virus, killing eight delegates. While this attack was atypical in its scale, health workers and government officials have been frequently threatened with violence since the crisis began. Residents of the village went on hunger strike in November to protest the presence of soldiers who had been stationed in their community in the wake of the killings.

Antidiscrimination laws do not protect LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people. Same-sex sexual activity is a criminal offense that can be punished with up to three years in prison, and although this law is rarely enforced, LGBT people have been arrested on lesser charges.

#### **G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 5 / 16**

Freedom of movement—long hindered by rampant crime and ubiquitous security checkpoints—was further restricted by Condé's August 13 declaration of a national public health emergency in response to the Ebola epidemic. Condé announced emergency

measures including stricter security checkpoints and the establishment of mandatory quarantines to be enforced by health workers and state security forces. Also in August, the government closed the country's land borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone, the other two countries most affected by the Ebola epidemic. The epidemic came on the heels of a severe measles outbreak in Guinea in January, which led to waves of (voluntary) internal displacement as the infection spread to half of the country's 33 districts.

Private business activity is hampered by corruption and political instability, among other factors. A centralized Agency for the Promotion of Private Investments aims to make the registration process faster and less expensive. Meanwhile, the Ebola epidemic brought some economic activity to a near-standstill, with exports of fruits and vegetables down 90 percent and container traffic at Conakry port reduced by a third.

Societal discrimination against women is pervasive. Rape and sexual harassment are common but underreported due to fears of stigmatization. While women have legal access to land, credit, and business, they are disadvantaged by inheritance laws and the traditional justice system. Guinean law allows husbands to forbid their wives from working. Female genital mutilation is nearly ubiquitous, affecting up to 96 percent of all girls and women in the country.

### **Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)**

**X = Score Received**

**Y = Best Possible Score**

**Z = Change from Previous Year**

**Full Methodology**